

The Oregonian

Mayor Wheeler: Portland, Imagine What We Can Accomplish

*By Ted Wheeler
January 6, 2019*

Imagine for a moment a city where every single person, regardless of their race or socio-economic status can access the same economic opportunities. Imagine a city of rapid growth and unprecedented change, where its leaders cut through the rancor and collaborate on how to cement a future of equity, diversity and inclusion. Imagine a safe city with all the affordable housing we need, a city that uses its resources to help lift the marginalized up and into stability.

This is the Portland I imagine. This is the Portland I dream about every single day.

You chose me to be your mayor to get us closer to this reality. And 2018 was a significant year of results for my administration and our city.

I hear every day from Portlanders who are anxious that they will be priced out of Portland and forced to move away from their jobs, schools and community institutions. We hear you, and we see you.

That's why we built a record number of affordable housing units in 2018. It gets better. Next year, we will double the production target. The voter-approved Portland Housing Bond is ahead of schedule with nearly half the promised affordable housing either completed or in progress in the first two years of a seven-year plan. I helped lead the passage of the \$653 million regional housing bond and its accompanying constitutional amendment, which will do even more to provide housing stability for Portlanders in the years ahead.

In 2018, we provided services to nearly 6,000 people who were on the brink of losing their homes, offering housing stability to keep them off the streets. More than 5,000 people experiencing homelessness were moved off the streets or out of shelters and into stable housing. Shelter space nearly doubled over the last three years, with nearly 8,500 people relying on shelters as an alternative to living outside.

With growth comes big city problems that impact livability. I want Portland to be the cleanest city in America. So we expanded needle collection and later this year will dramatically increase city-managed trash pick-up in downtown Portland to seven days a week, which has never been done before. In addition, in less than two years we will have about 1,000 additional trash cans. Our new program to safely dispose of dilapidated and abandoned RVs continues to grow.

Then there's the long-neglected transportation, parks and civic infrastructure. Funding to replace crumbling infrastructure has always been hard to come by. That's why I championed the innovative Build Portland initiative during the 2017 budget process that aims to allocate \$600 million over the next 20 years to the problem. As a result, in 2018, seven projects identified as priorities but were previously never funded moved forward including improvements to Lents Town Center and renovations of Mt. Scott Community Center to name a few.

Now let's talk about money. We prioritized the city's fiscal responsibility by working with city council to deliver my second balanced budget which was unanimously passed by the council -- something that was not always possible for past mayoral administrations. Further evidence of

responsible financial stewardship is the Portland Building renovation – one of the biggest construction projects in the city’s history. Here’s the great news: It’s on time and under budget.

You asked for more foot patrols in high volume areas. We listened, and we delivered. You asked for trained personnel in the field to manage interactions with people who suffer mental health and addiction issues and those who are experiencing homelessness. So we significantly increased funding for the Behavioral Health Unit and the Service Coordination Team and are now hiring a Homelessness Liaison.

You asked for more community input on policing directives and policy, so we created the Portland Committee on Community Engaged Policing. You asked for non-sworn, unarmed personnel who could respond to non-emergency police matters in the community, so we created a new model of policing using Public Safety Support Specialists. On top of that, to make sure that limited public safety dollars are used as effectively as possible, we even hired three internal auditors.

As your mayor, I will continue to listen and learn from our vocal critics who make us better through the necessary distilling process that comes with rigorous debate. We will learn from each other, despite a particularly fractious time in the city.

Portland will be among a handful of cities that show the nation that we can address our significant challenges and maintain healthy civic pride.

I do not -- and will not -- shy away from the intractable problems facing our beautiful city. I will work with my empowered, diverse and brilliant staff to continue fighting for you.

Portland, just imagine what we can accomplish when we set aside our differences and work together to build this city together -- one that reflects our core values of equity, diversity and inclusion.

1,200 Portland Employees' Salaries Frozen Due to High Pay

By Gordon Friedman

January 4, 2019

More than 1,200 city of Portland employees have had their pay frozen because their salaries are higher than what human resources officials determined are “justified.”

Among them are more than a dozen bureau directors, including the city’s human resources director and Police Chief Danielle Outlaw.

Affected employees were notified by email Thursday. Many of them said they are confused, upset or both.

“We’re hearing frustration and disappointment with how information is being rolled out,” said Sonia Schmanski, chief of staff for Commissioner Nick Fish. “People are getting emails they don’t understand, and they have both concerns and questions.”

The pay freeze for roughly 70 percent of the city’s non-unionized workers – meaning they’ll get no merit or cost-of-living raises until further notice – is one of the first consequences of a new state law mandating greater pay equity.

The gist of the law, which took effect January 1, is that employees with similar backgrounds who do similar work have to be paid equally or they can recover outsized legal damages. The law is

intended to protect women, minorities and other groups that have historically been found to get smaller salaries than others doing similar jobs.

To fix any inequities, employers may only raise the pay of workers found to be underpaid, not dole out pay cuts to those on the high side.

As a result, the city notified more than 500 employees Thursday that they will receive a raise. The increases in hourly pay ranged from as little as 1 cent to \$16.32.

The city also froze the pay of about 850 workers at the level they were paid in 2018.

And, for about 350 workers, it did both. They got a raise -- and at the same time were notified they had been pushed above the "justified" pay range, meaning a raise and pay freeze all at once.

The messages caused outrage among managers citywide and anxiety in the ranks, according to several city employees who witnessed bosses and coworkers fretting over the notices.

Officials never intended to imply that people are overpaid, said Serilda Summers-McGee, director of the Bureau of Human Resources. (Summers-McGee was one of the bureau directors whose pay was deemed above what is justified and subsequently frozen.)

"That is the way that some folks are interpreting that language," she said, "and it is something that the city of Portland is going to have to remedy in communications moving forward."

High-ranking managers called out as being paid more than is justified include the city's deputy chief administrative officer, the city economist, the spokespeople for numerous city bureaus and two of the assistant police chiefs, among many others.

Human resources officials will meet with the City Council on Tuesday to discuss the pay equity law, Summers-McGee said. It's unclear what actions, if any, the council may be considering.

It's also an open question how the pay equity law will affect the city budget, said Jessica Kinard, interim City Budget Office director.

Portland NAACP, Others Rally, Demanding City Rescind Earthquake Warning Sign Ordinance

By Andrew Theen

January 5, 2019

Portland NAACP leaders, renters rights groups and music advocates are sounding the alarm over what they say is a "stealth" attempt to undermine local property owners who live or work in older brick buildings.

The groups held a news conference outside City Hall on Saturday morning to demand the city rescind an ordinance, which affects about 1,600 unreinforced masonry buildings, requiring owners post a sign warning of the building's dangers in the event of a major earthquake.

The Rev. E.D. Mondainé, president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's Portland chapter and pastor at Celebration Tabernacle Church in Kenton, tied what the city maintains is just a requirement to help notify the public to the region's long history of racist policies that have led to gentrification and displacement for African Americans.

Mondainé said the black community in Portland has been told many times in the past not to worry.

“We will no longer allow the same tactics,” Mondainé said, citing Oregon’s explicit policy at its origin excluding blacks from living here, the Portland area’s assurances to black residents ahead of the Vanport flood and the long history of red-lining and discrimination in housing policies in inner North and Northeast Portland. “We will no longer allow the same principles that have driven us out again,” he said, with a crowd of supporters behind him, “We will no longer allow these things to remove us from our community. We want action. “

The City Council in October approved the ordinance, which Bureau of Development Services officials say is just about providing better awareness for tenants, visitors and occupants at the buildings.

Public buildings affected by the rules were to install signage by this week. Nonprofit organizations, like churches, have until 2020 to comply. Most other building owners have until March 1 to comply.

Speakers at the Saturday rally railed against the city’s ordinance, calling it a “secret lien” that would force landowners to ultimately sell to well-heeled private developers and lose out on loans or other financial services which would allow them to update their building to meet safety requirements.

Alex Cousins, a spokesman for the city’s Bureau of Development Services, said “nothing” in the ordinance “attaches an encumbrance or lien” to the building’s title.

“The declaration is not a lien and does not compel any retrofitting on the part of the building owner,” he said in an email.

Meara McLaughlin, executive director of the MusicPortland advocacy group, cautioned the ordinance “threatens the existence” of bars like Kelly’s Olympian and the McMenamin’s White Eagle, which often cater to hip-hop artists.

The advocates agreed with the city that the ordinance doesn’t explicitly mention a lien, but they said the city there’s “a separate non-negotiable and compulsory agreement” that puts an encumbrance on the land owner’s title.

“Without a lawyer in the room you won’t even get a semblance of what’s being done,” Mondainé said in an interview after the news conference, “it’s so convoluted and it’s gone in so many different directions that it doesn’t have a real shape or form anymore. It’s like a runaway train.” They argue the policy will force artificially low sales prices for properties in gentrifying parts of town and lead to businesses being devalued. It will make it more difficult to refinance, get a loan or lease the building, they argue, likening it to a “Scarlet Letter”

The city said its database of unreinforced masonry buildings has existed since 1995 “and has been known to building owners, lenders and insurers for over two decades.”

The city said its Bureaus of Emergency Management and Development Services will set up an advisory committee this year “to work with the Portland NAACP and other stakeholders on collaborative ways to implement” the retrofitting program in the city “We look forward to working with community members and building owners to make our city safer in the event of a large earthquake.”

Mondainé said the city has made some attempts “that perhaps are promising” to engage the black community, but he is still calling for the ordinance to be rescinded.

Man Killed by Police Officer in Confrontation at Southeast Portland Home

By Fedor Zarkhin

January 6, 2019

A Portland police officer fatally shot a man Sunday at a Southeast Portland home after the landlord reported a stranger who appeared to be homeless and suffering from a mental illness lying on a tenant's door stoop.

An East Precinct Officer responded about 2 p.m. to a report of an "unwanted person" at the home in the 9600 block of Southeast Market Street, said police spokesman Sgt. Chris Burley. The man wouldn't leave the property.

The officer requested backup, then soon reported "shots fired" and that he had discharged his gun and the man was injured, Burley said.

The man was taken by ambulance to a local hospital, where he was declared dead, Burley said.

He didn't identify the man or the officer involved. The officer has been placed on administrative leave under standard police policy and will be identified within 24 hours, Burley said. Police will identify the dead man after an autopsy is completed and relatives are notified, he said.

No police or other residents were injured in the shooting, he said.

The owner of the property, Lidiya Omelchenko, said she called police when she saw a man in his mid- to-late-40s lying down in front of the house, which she leases. She didn't recognize the man, she said, and thought he might live on the streets or was experiencing a mental health crisis.

Omelchenko waited for an officer to arrive, pointed to the man, then went into her nearby house.

"I thought I should call the police, they could help him, find him an apartment, a place to sleep," she said.

About 10 minutes later, she heard a single "pop," Omelchenko said.

When she came out, the man was being carried out of the house with a sheet over him, she said. An officer later told her that the man went into the house when the responding officer approached, Omelchenko said.

She said the man appeared to be African American.

Omelchenko expressed dismay at the man's death.

Portland police have faced criticism in the last two years for officer shootings of black men, including Patrick Kimmons, 27, last year in downtown Portland and Quanice Hayes, 17, in Northeast Portland in 2017. Grand juries ruled both police shootings justified. The Police Bureau also is under a federal settlement reached after an U.S. Justice Department investigation found officers often used excessive force against people with mental illness.

On Sunday, Police Chief Danielle Outlaw and Mayor Ted Wheeler came to the scene of the shooting. Wheeler declined comment.

Outlaw later released a statement saying, "As with all officer-involved shootings, we are committed to a full investigation. A loss of life impacts us all and I know we all immediately search for answers. I ask for patience as we continue our investigative process and then release information as soon as it is appropriate."

Police didn't give further details of what prompted the shooting, how many times the man was shot or if he had any weapon.

It was the second fatal officer-involved shooting of the weekend in the metro area. Early Saturday, a Milwaukie man died after exchanging gunfire with Clackamas County sheriff's deputies near Oak Grove Methodist Church.

In 2018, Portland police shot and killed three people and wounded two others in confrontations.

Police asked anyone with information about Sunday's shooting to contact homicide Detective Erik Kammerer at 503-823-0762 or Erik.Kammerer@portlandoregon.gov or Detective Mark Slater at 503-823-9319 or Mark.Slater@portlandoregon.gov.

The Portland Tribune

Traffic Fatalities Fall 24 Percent in Portland

*By Jim Redden
January 6, 2019*

Crash-related deaths dropped in 2018 for the first time in four years, corresponding with an increased emphasis on the Vision Zero Action Plan.

After years of increasing traffic fatalities, crash-related death in Portland dropped 24 percent in 2018, a significant decrease that transportation officials are at a loss to explain.

Although the decrease corresponds to an increased emphasis on the city's Vision Zero Action Plan to eliminate all fatal crashes by 2025, Portland Bureau of Transportation spokesman Dylan Rivera says the city is reluctant to claim credit.

"The number of crashes can vary significantly from year to year. One year doesn't make a trend. While we hope some of our efforts are having an effect, we think it's premature to point to any particular change as causing the fatality figures to change. We need to see what's happening at the national and state level for context, and see if patterns emerge over a number of years," says Rivera.

The numbers are nevertheless startling. According to preliminary figures, 11 fewer people were killed in crashes in Portland last year — with deaths falling from 45 in 2017 to 34 in 2018.

That is the first decrease since 2014, when deaths fell from 36 the previous year to 28, a reduction of eight or 22 percent. Last year's decline was larger, even though many more people were living in Portland then.

The largest decrease in 2018 was related to crashes involving only motor vehicles, where deaths of drivers and passengers fell from 17 in 2017 to seven last year. Pedestrian deaths also fell from 19 to 17. The only category to increase was motorcycle deaths, which jumped from seven to nine. Bike deaths held stable at two, as did transit-related deaths at zero.

The decline is a dramatic reversal from the past few years, when fatalities jumped from 28 in 2014 to 45 in 2017. That increase reflected a national trend blamed on more people driving because of a strong economy and continuing low gas prices. Those factors did not change in 2018, which makes the Portland decline that much more extraordinary, especially considering population growth.

Although Rivera does not want to speculate, the decrease in fatalities corresponds to the implementation of the Vision Zero Action Plan approved by the council in December 2016. The plan, which was drafted by the Portland Bureau of Transportation with the help of a 26-member task force, includes 32 specific steps ranging from street improvements to increased traffic law enforcement and public education. Among other things, it designates 30 streets in Portland when many crashes occur as a high crash network. It proposes major safety projects on two streets and five intersections within the network every year.

Since the plan was adopted, the council has reduced the speed limit on residential streets from 20 to 25 miles an hour, reduced the speed limit on Outer Division from 35 to 30 miles per hour, and authorized automated citation-issuing Speed Safety Cameras on dangerous roads, including Division Street, Marine Drive and 122nd Avenue. The transportation bureau has also completed a number of safety projects funded by the temporary 10-cent-a-gallon city gas tax approved by voters at the May 216 primary election.

The reduction in crashes involving only motor vehicles in 2018 is especially noteworthy. Not only did the number of fatalities drop from 17 to 7, they fell dramatically as the year progressed. The first four fatalities happened in the first quarter of the year, while the other three were spread out over the remaining eight months.

According to PBOT, 21 safety projects on the High Crash Network roads are scheduled to start or continue in 2019. They include work on Outer Division, one of the most dangerous streets in the city.

In addition, Dylan says the bureau also plans to: continue the Safe Ride Home program, which provides free transit and discount taxi and ride-sharing company rides on holidays; expand the Street Team program, which provides direct outreach to the public on the High Crash Network streets; and launch a second citywide education campaign focused on the dangers of speed.

You can see and learn more about the PBOT safety projects scheduled for 2019 [here](#).

Witness: Police Shot Man with Knife

*By Jim Redden
January 7, 2018*

UPDATE: Sunday afternoon SE Portland police call ends in confrontation, officer-involved shooting death.

A man died after being shot by Portland police Sunday afternoon in Southeast Portland.

The shooting happened in the area of Southeast Market Street and 92nd Avenue just before 3 p.m. One neighbor told KOIN 6 News the man was lying in the entryway to someone's home before the police were called. A witness said an officer shot the man inside another home after he pulled out a knife, refused orders to drop it, and advanced on the officer with the knife.

[The] police officer said 'You need to stop or I'm going to tase you.' The police officer warned him 5 or 6 times...he never listened and three gun shots went off," said Desmond Pescaia, who told KOIN 6 News he witnesses the confrontation.

The man was taken to an area hospital, where he was declared dead.

The incident was the second Portland officer-involved shooting in three days. On Jan. 3, Officer Onest Robert fired his gun when a woman advanced on him with a knife during a domestic

violence call. No one was injured, and Anita M. Ruiz, 34, was lodged in the Multnomah County Jail on charges of menacing and unlawful use of a weapon.

The Portland Police Bureau Detective Division's Homicide Detail, Training and Professional Standards Divisions, as well as the East County Major Crimes Team, City of Portland's Independent Police Review, Multnomah County District Attorney's Office, and the Oregon State Medical Examiner's Office continue to investigate this afternoon's incident that resulted in an officer-involved shooting.

According to police, the incident started at 2:03 p.m., on Jan. 6 when East Precinct officers responded to the report that a person at a residence in the 9600 block of Southeast Market Street who refused to leave the property.

At some point after the officer arrived, the officer contacted the person. A short time later, the officer broadcast that he had fired his duty firearm.

The officer requested emergency medical personnel to respond. Officers provided emergency medical first aid prior to emergency medical personnel arriving. When emergency medical personnel arrived, they continued to provide the person with emergency medical aid and transported him by ambulance to a Portland hospital for treatment. Once at the hospital medical personnel determined the suspect was deceased.

"As with all officer-involved shootings, we are committed to a full investigation," Chief Danielle Outlaw said. "A loss of life impacts us all and I know we all immediately search for answers. I ask for patience as we continue our investigative process and then release information as soon as it is appropriate."

Anyone with information about this investigation should contact contact Portland Police Bureau Homicide Detail Detective Erik Kammerer at 503-823-0762 or Erik.Kammerer@portlandoregon.gov or Detective Mark Slater at 503-823-9319 or Mark.Slater@portlandoregon.gov

Portland Mayor's Chief of Staff Michael Cox Resigns

*By Zane Sparling
January 4, 2019*

The letter of resignation follows the disclosure of Cox's City Hall affair about two weeks ago.

The chief of staff for Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler has resigned — effective Monday, Jan. 7.

Michael Cox gave no reason for his resignation in a brief email to the mayor submitted on Jan. 4.

"Thank you for the opportunity to serve," he wrote, according to a public records request made by the Portland Tribune.

Political observers will surely suspect the timing of Cox's announcement, which comes about two weeks after news of his City Hall affair was publicly aired.

At the time, officials claimed that Cox's relationship with Legislative Director Michelle Plambeck did not flout rules prohibiting romantic relationships between a supervisor and a subordinate employee.

Cox joined the mayor's team in 2014, serving as a spokesman for Wheeler during his term as state treasurer. Cox then managed Wheeler's successful campaign for mayor in 2015 and 2016.

He moved into the top spot in July, 2017 after Wheeler's former chief of staff, Maurice Henderson, left for a job as TriMet's chief operating officer.

In a short statement announcing the resignation, Wheeler thanked Cox for his years of service.

"I've known him for many years," Wheeler said. "He is not only a trusted and loyal advisor but also a friend. Michael cares deeply about the progress and the future of the city."

Wheeler said his deputy chief of staff, Kristin Dennis, will become the interim chief of staff.

Cox has also worked in communications for the Oregon House Democratic Caucus, SEIU California, and Cover Oregon. His immediate next steps remain unclear.

Willamette Week

Portland Mayor's Chief of Staff Michael Cox Has Resigned

By Rachel Monahan

January 4, 2019

The resignation comes after the mayor faced criticisms for his first two years on the job, as well as a disclosure by Cox of a relationship with a subordinate.

Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler's chief of staff Michael Cox has resigned, four sources in and close to City Hall tell WW.

Cox led the mayor's office for six months and been on Wheeler's staff for more than four years, including during his tenure as Oregon treasurer.

It was not immediately clear what triggered Cox's departure. The mayor faced blistering reviews of his first two years in office. Among other matters, Wheeler has faced criticism for the staffing of his office. Last month, Cox disclosed a relationship with a subordinate in the mayor's office—but Wheeler changed the organizational arrangement of his office to accommodate that relationship.

Wheeler's office and Cox did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Update, 3 pm:

The mayor has now offered a statement, without explanation for why Cox is leaving:

"I want to thank Michael Cox for his years of service. I've known him for many years. He is not only a trusted and loyal advisor but also a friend. Michael cares deeply about the progress and the future of the city. Kristin Dennis, who is my Deputy Chief of Staff, will be serving as Interim Chief of Staff."

The Portland Mercury

NAACP Coalition Rallies Against Portland Ordinance That Labels Earthquake-Unsafe Buildings

*By Blair Stenvick
January 5, 2019*

A coalition led by the Portland chapter of the NAACP held a rally outside Portland City Hall Saturday morning to draw attention to an ordinance that requires older brick buildings to be labeled as not earthquake-safe. The coalition believes that the ordinance places an unfair burden on building owners affected by the ordinance—many of whom are people of color.

The ordinance specifically targets unreinforced masonry buildings, or URMs, the first buildings to collapse in the event of a major earthquake. It requires that these buildings—about 1,600 altogether—have an 8-by-10-inch plaque stating: "This is an unreinforced masonry building. Unreinforced masonry buildings may be unsafe in the event of a major earthquake."

The Portland City Council voted on the ordinance, which also requires the earthquake-unsafe information to be mentioned in all future building leases, last October. It will go into effect on March 1.

The NAACP-led coalition argues that such requirements place a "Scarlet Letter" on older Portland buildings, including many Black-owned businesses, music venues, and churches, and will make it difficult for owners to lease, refinance, or mortgage their buildings. The coalition also includes Portland Tenants United, MusicPortland, Save Portland Buildings, and Portland Assembly.

In an energetic speech to kick off the rally, NAACP Portland chapter President E. D. Mondainé talked about the new ordinance in the context of Portland's broader racial history. He mentioned Vanport, the largely Black community that was created by discriminatory real estate practices and wiped away in a 1948 flood under suspicious circumstances, and suggested that the URM ordinance was a continuation of racist policies.

"I'm here to speak about the social costs of this placarding ordinance," McLaughlin said. "If you lose one third of our live music activity in the city, that is a death knell."

At a press conference last week, newly sworn-in City Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty criticized the already-voted on city ordinance.

"Putting a plaque on a faith institution basically closes that faith institution. It closes that community center. It closes that school," said Hardesty, who is the former president of the Portland NAACP chapter. "Because who is going to go into a building if there's a plaque on it that says, 'Oh, by the way this is going to fall down if there's an earthquake'?"

Hardesty said that while supports buildings being reinforced to sustain a major earthquake, she doesn't back a city mandate that lacks financial assistance for those who can't afford upgrades.

"It should be safe for everyone," she said. "It shouldn't just be safe for people who can afford the reinforcements."

Police Fatally Shoot Man in SE Portland

*By Alex Zielinski
January 6, 2019*

A unidentified man has died after being shot by a Portland police officer this afternoon.

According to the Portland Police Bureau (PPB), police officers were dispatched around 2 pm to SE Market and 96th, where a man was allegedly refusing to leave a house. Shortly after arriving at the residence, an unnamed officer fired his gun at the man. It's unclear what prompted him to shoot, or if the man was armed.

The man was still alive when emergency medical staff showed up, but had died by the time they brought him to a hospital.

The officer involved is on paid administrative leave until an investigation into the shooting concludes.

"As with all officer-involved shootings, we are committed to a full investigation," said PPB Chief Danielle Outlaw in a press statement. "A loss of life impacts us all and I know we all immediately search for answers. I ask for patience as we continue our investigative process and then release information as soon as it is appropriate."

This is the first fatal police shooting of 2019. This post will be updated once more information becomes public.

What Can Portland Learn From Minneapolis' Single-Family Zoning Ban? We Asked Its Mayor.

*By Alex Zielinski
January 4, 2019*

As housing prices and homelessness rates in growing cities like Portland continue to climb, city governments have begun experimenting with new policies to relieve their rent-burdened citizens.

The most recent—and most radical—example comes from Minneapolis, which became the first major US city to eliminate single-family zoning in December. This means that property owners will be allowed to construct buildings with up to three units—like a duplex or triplex—on property that was exclusively reserved for a single home.

The decision is expected to increase the number of affordable homes in Minneapolis, and reverse archaic zoning laws built to segregate the city's diverse communities.

Minneapolis, like Portland, is overrun with residential buildings that fall into one of two categories: Massive apartment complexes or standalone houses built for a single family. What's absent is what city planning wonks call "missing middle" housing—the type of residence that falls somewhere between these two polarizing categories, like a duplex, triplex, or a cluster of small standalone homes. These in-between buildings are considered the answer to skyrocketing rents, car-dependent neighborhoods, and creeping city sprawl.

But with restrictive laws that only allow the construction of massive apartments or single homes, cities are effectively banning this type of mid-sized housing.

Minneapolis is the first to approve this type of zoning reform at a citywide level, but it's not the only city that's taking it on. Portland City Council is slated to vote on a similar plan in 2019. In September, Portland's planning commission approved a proposal to cap the size of all new Portland homes and allow a maximum of four units on one property. If approved, that means this plan would go further than Minneapolis' zoning change.

It's possible the Oregon State Legislature, however, might beat Portland to the punch. Shortly after Minneapolis City Council approved its zoning change in December, Oregon House Speaker Tina Kotek shared plans to introduce a bill during the 2019 legislature that would require cities with over 10,000 residents to allow up to four units on property currently zoned for a single-family home.

To prepare us for this potential housing reform—at either the city or state level—the Mercury spoke with the top architect on the city's zoning overhaul, Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey.

Frey entered the mayor's office just over a year ago with big promises to expand affordable housing and improve resources for the city's houseless community. His immediate push to change the city's zoning rules was met with both fanfare and resistance—many still think the change will clutter their neighborhood or ruin their views.

With the same arguments bubbling up in Portland, we asked Frey how he navigated the conversation and put the promise of longterm housing affordability before petty complaints.

(Editor's Note: The Mercury's questions have been edited for clarity)

Portland Mercury: What inspired you to take on single-family zoning in the first place?

Mayor Jacob Frey: Minneapolis has a long history of very intentional segregation. After the Civil Rights Act was passed and it became illegal to explicitly make decisions based on race, a lot of that tendency shifted toward our zoning code. I believe the precision of the solutions need to match the precision of the harm initially inflicted. And that harm was precise.

Mercury: The city council approved this plan with a 12-1 vote. Did you have that kind of support from the beginning?

Frey: I would say that it shifted over time. A lot of it is education and understanding around what the plan does and does not do.

Mercury: What were the biggest misconceptions?

Frey: Minneapolis is not bulldozing any neighborhoods. Right now in Minneapolis, you are allowed to knock down a small, single-family, relatively affordable ranch home and put up a mansion. That's already allowed right now. All we're saying is that in addition to putting up a mansion, you can also put up something more affordable.

There are large swaths of our city zoned exclusively for single-family, which means that unless you're able to build a really big home on a really big lot, you can't live in that neighborhood. I believe in a beautiful diversity of socio-economic backgrounds in every neighborhood. I believe in affordable housing amidst middle and upper income, and in order to do that, you have to first allow for it.

Mercury: Any other major roadblocks you met along the way?

Frey: It's funny in that, especially in liberal cities like Minneapolis and Portland, people are all for affordable housing conceptually, at the macro level. But as you start talking about putting it in anywhere near the vicinity where they live, there's pushback.

Sometimes, the only thing people hate worse than the status quo is any change at all. In our case, like Portland, change is necessary.

Mercury: Traditional single-family neighborhoods aren't always the most accessible for people without cars. How does public transportation play into this plan?

Frey: If you're concerned about transporting a new population from their home to work... that's a fair concern. We need to build out our transportation system and that needs to grow part and parcel with growth. At a certain point, it does become a chicken or an egg thing. But we weren't going to be chicken about it.

Mercury: That was a great joke. Can you tell us how you crafted this plan without having any other city examples to base it off of?

Frey: The reality of it is that we are entering uncharted territory. But it's territory that needs to be entered if you plan on making any sort of difference. The issue I'm perhaps most passionate about is pushing back on very intentional segregation, which is exactly what this does.

Mercury: Private developers can have considerable sway over city zoning decisions. What did they have to say about this major change?

Frey: We did not hear anything from developers about this plan. It wouldn't necessarily be an issue for large-scale developers since you can already build skyscrapers downtown. People talk about wanting community-oriented development. My question is: How do you define that? Are you talking about more locally-owned operations that have the ability to offer two or six or eight units [of housing], not 350? That's what this allows.

Mercury: This plan is, in part, meant to expand affordable housing in Minneapolis. How quickly do you see that development and affordability in Minneapolis?

Frey: Development is impacted by a hundred different facets. Zoning is one of them. It's long-term change that we're focused on. You won't see dramatic shifts in the next two years. Is the comprehensive plan going to create affordability in and off itself? No. But it is an important tool when used in conjunction with subsidy and the creation of more low-income housing throughout the city.

Tackling intentional segregation is something that we in Minneapolis wanted to confront, and it's an issue where we're not alone. Many cities have this dynamic and I would hope that many cities are up to the challenge.

Mercury: Anything unexpected or uniquely important you learned from this process?

Frey: People care about their neighborhoods, and I love them for it. They are in love with the unique characteristics that make their neighborhood special. Those characteristics can and will remain, while also allowing a city to evolve. Cities evolve, and we need to make sure that ours evolves in a way that accommodates people who need homes.

If I could offer any advice to Portland, it's that the conversation is going to be difficult, but it's one worth having and it's important. Is our city universally pleased with outcome? No. But universal pleasure is not what you aspire to achieve.

The Portland Business Journal

Wheeler's Chief of Staff Resigns

By Andy Giegerich

January 4, 2019

Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler has lost another chief of staff.

Michael Cox submitted his letter of resignation, Wheeler's spokeswoman Eileen Park said in an email Friday afternoon.

Cox and Wheeler have worked together since Wheeler was the Oregon state treasurer.

"I've known him for many years," Wheeler said in a release. "He is not only a trusted and loyal advisor but also a friend. Michael cares deeply about the progress and the future of the city."

Kristin Dennis, Wheeler's deputy chief of staff, will become Wheeler's interim chief of staff.

Cox took over for Maurice Henderson last June.

OPB

New Pay Equity Law Throws City Of Portland Into Confusion

By Ericka Cruz Guevarra and Amelia Templeton

January 4, 2019

Earlier this week, the Portland Bureau of Human Resources sent emails to city employees detailing how a new state pay equity law would affect them. The law went into effect Jan. 1.

The bureau notified 518 city employees they would see a change in pay as a result of the Oregon Equal Pay Act of 2017, while another 869 were told they would not.

But 1,219 city employees — including Portland Police Chief Danielle Outlaw and now-resigned Fire and Rescue Chief Mike Myers — were also told in an email that they were being “red circled.”

That means they would, at least temporarily, not receive pay raises based on merit or even cost of living increases while the city attorney and human resources directors work with the City Council on how to remain compliant with the law. Employees whose rate of pay was found to be above “justified salary” — determined by comparing factors like seniority, experience, education and merit — were red-circled.

The city's human resources department stresses the pay freeze is just a temporary measure.

“We wanted to freeze every person that was impacted by the analysis and changes of compensation as a result of the pay equity legislation,” said Serilda Summers-McGee, chief human resources officer for Portland. “We didn't want any additional adjustments in compensation to occur, until we speak with Council about remaining in compliance.”

The Bureau of Human Resources is in Mayor Ted Wheeler's management portfolio. Wheeler's communications director referred questions to the human resources department on Thursday and hadn't responded to follow up questions as of Friday afternoon.

The emails bewildered some city employees, who were surprised by abrupt communications regarding changes in pay as a result of the law, and city leaders appeared to be caught flat-footed.

Emails sent to city employees explaining the new law and how it would affect employees' pay raised questions about how prepared the state and employers — including Oregon's most populous city — were in implementing the law.

"We understand that it would have been better to have more time and provide you with more information before the pay equity decision emails were sent out," read an email sent to city staff this week explaining earlier communications regarding pay changes.

"BHR staff were literally working up to the last minute to implement the changes before midnight, December 31st," the email said. "That said, you told us you wanted more transparency, more consistency, and more proactive approaches to the services we provide. We know this multi-bureau process did not meet those expectations."

The problem at the city of Portland occurred in part because of how long it took state regulators to come up with rules for employers regarding compliance with the law, which the governor signed in June 2017, according to Marshall Runkel, chief of staff to Commissioner Chloe Eudaly.

State regulators didn't issue the administrative order and rules for the law until Nov. 19, 2018. Those rules outlined implementation of the law and included definitions, work of comparable character, exceptions and posting notices.

In December, the Portland Tribune reported on a meeting in which legislators grilled regulators with the state Bureau of Labor and Industries for dragging their feet on finalizing rules for the new law.

As a result, 15 heads of city bureaus and offices will have their pay "red circled." That means more than half of all top city managers — nearly 70 percent — were told in an email that they were no longer eligible for pay or cost of living increases while the city determines how it will keep in compliance with the law. Myers, the former head of the Fire Bureau, resigned the same week the emails were sent to staff.

"I think it would be hard to overstate how big a problem it is for morale," Runkel said. "A motivated workforce is key to success in any endeavor. So I think we stepped in it with our workforce on this issue, and we need to correct."

Runkel and other chiefs of staff are working to solve the communications breakdown ahead of a planned meeting on the issue among city commissioners next week. While Runkel thinks the goal of the equal pay law is laudable, he says it was poorly executed by state and city leaders.

"That's not the ideal way for an employer to communicate with employees," Runkel said, adding the city email lacked context and explanation.

For its part, BOLI said it was never directed or given the resources to communicate with employers on a mass scale about the new law.

"So what we have done is get ourselves ready to do enforcement through our civil rights division because under this law, employees can go to BOLI with a complaint," said Christine Lewis, legislative and communications director with BOLI.

"The only thing that the Legislature directed us to do was to make a poster, and help with the required posting."

Lewis added that BOLI is not responsible for mass enforcement or spot checking; she said adding the law had only created a “complaint-driven process.”

Leila Wall, a training and development specialist with the technical assistance for employers program at BOLI, said her team has been conducting seminars with hundreds of employers since mid-2018.

Police Shoot And Kill A Man In SE Portland Sunday

By Conrad Wilson

January 6, 2019

An officer with the Portland Police Bureau shot and killed a man Sunday afternoon.

The shooting took place in southeast Portland after 2 p.m. on the 9600 block of SE Market Street just east of Interstate 205, police said. An officer was responding to a report of a man who was not leaving a residence.

Lidiya Omelchenko told OPB she called police after her neighbor told her there was a man who appeared to be sleeping directly outside his home.

“[My neighbor] came and talked to me, somebody sleeping on his porch, steps,” Omelchenko said in an interview. “I told him, ‘call the police.’ After this, I went to see this man and I called [the police] too.”

Omelchenko said the man appeared to be an African-American in his 40s or 50s. She said he appeared to be homeless.

The officer arrived at the residence and contacted a man, according to the Portland Police Bureau. Shortly after, the officer radioed he had fired his gun and requested emergency medical personnel to the scene, police said.

The man who was shot was transported to a Portland hospital where he was pronounced dead.

Neither the identity of the officer nor the deceased man has been released.

PPB Chief Danielle Outlaw said the bureau is committed to a full investigation.

“A loss of life impacts us all and I know we all immediately search for answers,” she said in a statement. “I ask for patience as we continue our investigative process and then release information as soon as it is appropriate.”

A Police Bureau spokesman says the officer who fired is on paid administrative leave, pending an investigation by police and the Multnomah County District Attorney’s office.

Under bureau policy, the officer’s identity will be released within 24 hours.

The Oregon State Medical Examiner is conducting an autopsy.

Portland Mayor's Chief Of Staff Resigns After 7 Months

By Amelia Templeton

January 4, 2019

The chief of staff to Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler has resigned.

In a brief written statement, Wheeler thanked Michael Cox for his service but did not go into any reason for his departure: “He is not only a trusted and loyal advisor but also a friend. Michael cares deeply about the progress and the future of the city.”

Cox ran Wheeler’s campaign for mayor in 2016 and had served as his communications director in the mayor’s office.

Wheeler promoted him to chief of staff just seven months ago. In that role, he was in charge of pushing the mayor’s agenda within City Hall.

Wheeler has suffered through a rough last six months. His colleagues voted down a plan to give the mayor more power to limit protests, and he was overheard complaining about his job and suggesting he may not want a second term in office.

Cox had recently disclosed a romantic relationship with a woman he indirectly supervised in the mayor’s office, according to Willamette Week and The Oregonian/Oregonlive. The city attorney determined the relationship did not violate city policies.